

[Anchor](#) by [Luddleston](#)

Series: [Gravity](#)[5]

Category: Dragon Age (Video Games), Dragon Age - All Media Types, Dragon Age: Origins

Genre: Canon Compliant, Canon-Typical Violence, Canonical Character Death, F/M, Oral Sex, Post-Canon, Vaginal Sex, the Dark Ritual happens but i am not writing that shit out, the canonical character death being Loghain

Language: English

Characters: Alistair (Dragon Age), Anora Mac Tir, Female Amell (Dragon Age), Leliana (Dragon Age), Loghain Mac Tir, Morrigan (Dragon Age), Oghren (Dragon Age), Sten (Dragon Age), Wynne (Dragon Age), Zevran Arainai

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Summary:

They're watching a warrior fighting hard against someone older and more skilled than she, and winning because she's unpredictable. They're watching a Warden, with all the strength that entails, a person who is used to fighting enemies several times her size, and who knows how to use her opponent's force against them.

They're watching the woman who's going to end the Blight.

The Landsmeet, the Battle of Denerim, and what lies after for Alistair and the newly-dubbed Hero of Ferelden.

Anchor

Author's Note:

We're going through the endgame now bayBEE! A few notes on this chapter:

1. Please observe the pure level of spite in me rewriting the Dark Ritual conversations because everything about that in-game feels bad and wrong and oh my god let's just let Morrigan and Alistair be friends who are doing something Not Fun for the sake of magic instead of antagonistic yet horny.
2. I reworked a few things in the endgame because them going back to Redcliffe, finding out the darkspawn aren't even in Redcliffe, and then turning around and going back to Denerim, while all the other armies move out from their home locations even though there's no way they could have been notified, makes NO SENSE. Especially since they all somehow get there at the same time even though Orzammar is way further from Denerim than the Dalish camp??? Where is the logic?? I'm trying to shove some logic in there.
3. I actually did have George kiss Alistair right outside Fort Drakon before the final battle. hell yeah. drama. please tell me if your Warden also did this, I like to think I'm not the only one who went HEHE DRAMATIC SMOOCHY.
4. For now this is the end of the series proper, but I do have an Awakening-era thingy that's their letters back and forth in the works!

When Alistair was ten years old, he'd been told to go wait in the hall while the arl and the arlessa finished the argument that eventually led to him being sent to the chantry. They'd started off speaking quietly, but partway through, they'd forgotten he was there or had assumed he'd run off, so he heard every accusation Lady Isolde threw, every acquiescence Eamon gave her, and every moment of his own fate being decided.

Hanging around the library while George, Anora, and Eamon discussed *claims to the throne* and the *Theirin* *bloodline* has much the same effect on his psyche, so they'll have to forgive him for scuttling off halfway through.

He takes refuge with Leliana, who's in George's room sitting on the resting couch and playing her lute, while Pudding naps at her feet. Alistair has little ear for music, but he lets her play some new material for him anyhow, if only to chase the deep gravity of Eamon's voice and the clipped formality of Anora's from his mind.

They spend a long time waiting. Alistair's head snaps up whenever someone enters the room, but it's just Sten, and then Wynne, and then some of the estate staff with food and drink. The food summons Oghren and Zevran, Oghren looking like he needs something to eat to sop up all the ale he'd been drinking, and Zevran looking like he needs to recuperate after tumbling that stablehand he'd been making eyes at earlier. Shale lumbers in eventually, moving very slowly so as not to break any furniture, and Morrigan scampers into the room in the form of a black cat before turning back into herself, giving all of them an idea of how she's been dodging the chambermaids trying to get her to dress properly.

George arrives after what feels like hours, and Alistair searches her face, trying to find something other than pure, simple exhaustion. He gets it when she gives him a little smile, before she turns and starts stripping off her armor. It's a real smile, not sympathy. Not a 'sorry Alistair, but I guess you have to suck it up and rule a nation, and you might be marrying your dead half-brother's widow' sort of smile. *Thank the Maker.*

"Anora has agreed to support the Grey Wardens' claims against Loghain, provided we support her sole claim to the throne as queen," George announces, setting her breastplate atop her trunk with a thump of punctuation.

Alistair's sigh of relief is impossible to keep back. Morrigan's sigh of relief is a little more degrading.

"However," George says, crossing the room to the table to the center and acquiring herself a plate of supper, "Anora stressed that, if at all possible,

she would like to keep Loghain alive."

Alistair's face hardens into a stony frown. He hears Sten scoff.

"I have my own thoughts, but I wanted your opinions," she says. "Some of them, I already know—" a pointed look at Alistair, who has made his thoughts on Loghain quite clear, "—but I trust all of you not only as friends but as advisors."

Wynne is giving George that indulgent sort of smile, like she's watching an apprentice successfully conquer some dangerous and difficult spellwork.

The first to speak, unsurprisingly, is Morrigan. "He could be of use. Many people like him, and may be less loyal to a regime that ousts him *and* kills him."

Alistair bites his tongue, but Sten doesn't. "You cannot leave an enemy like that alive. The Qun assimilates our enemies and uses them to bolster our own strength but even we understand that there are some that would cause such dissention, the nation as a whole is stronger if they are eliminated."

Leliana nods along with Sten's words. "A wounded beast is the most dangerous to fight. Gelded and stripped of his throne, Loghain would not hesitate to lash out."

Zevran adds, "he has already sent assassins after you. He would stop until he had your head. And all of us, I think, like your head where it is at."

"Still, it will be difficult to bring about the sort of change you are proposing without any member of the old regime or their family in charge," Wynne says. "I've no doubt you can do it, but you need to consider the uphill climb ahead."

Shale says, "the politics of you people are beyond me. Let me know if I can squish him. That is all."

Oghren seems to echo her sentiment by snoring loudly.

And then George looks to *him*. "You know what I have to say," Alistair says. "Even if you exile him, he will come back with an army. You're already fighting an army of darkspawn, you don't need to follow that up with an army of Loghain's supporters."

George gives a somber, jerky nod and then drops onto the couch next to Alistair. "Good," she says. "Good. I've got some leads that are promising evidence we could use against him, we should go out to the alienage first —"

"Tomorrow." Alistair puts a hand over hers. "We've still two days until the Landsmeet, and the last time you slept was when you were knocked out thanks to a dose of magebane. Rest for now, will you?"

Wynne stood, and smoothed out her skirts. "We'll all give you some time to sleep and recover, and reconvene in the morning."

Oghren, suddenly awake and paying attention, says, "you leave the two of them alone together, they're not gonna be sleeping."

"It is actually possible to be too tired for that," George says.

Oghren scoffs. "Humans. No stamina." Then he follows everybody out, slamming the door a little too hard behind himself.

"Let me get you something to eat," Alistair tells George, a moment later. There's nothing left over from supper, Oghren ensured that. "What would you like?"

"Anything," George says, dropping onto the couch. "I'm starving. I had tea with Anora, but it was all little snacks and I was sort of afraid to eat too much of them."

"Probably wouldn't be ladylike," Alistair agrees.

"Much rather be Wardenlike."

He squeezes her hand before heading for the door, and he wonders if she'll already be asleep by the time he gets back.

He picks up a plate of the roast lamb they all had for dinner, and then grabs whatever fruit he can find, which turns out to be a little basket of early spring strawberries. She's got a sweet tooth, so she'll love them.

He's not expecting to run into Anora on his way back to the room, but he supposes he shouldn't be surprised. She's housed in the same corridor they are.

Anora looks at Alistair, looks at the tray he's holding, looks at the door directly behind her that he's clearly headed for, and then nods.

"It is no surprise, in retrospect, that she wishes to keep you off the throne."

He's never met Anora before, well, today, really, but she's clearly extremely sharp. This isn't something he knows from this particular moment, because anybody could see him being a lovestruck idiot and put two and two together. Still, in that moment, he feels very much the fool, and he clears his throat, quite unable to come up with something to say.

"It's probably in Ferelden's best interests," he says eventually.

"I do not think you would be as poor a ruler as you presume," Anora says. "But you will serve the Wardens better."

"Bad idea to have a Warden on the throne, anyhow," Alistair says, although he can't explain the Calling and the very short lifespan and the eventual infertility thanks to the taint to *Anora*, of all people.

"I am glad that she has somebody to defend her."

"George doesn't need anybody to defend her." And perhaps, even in this, he is defending her. "But I will. To the end."

"Good." She takes a step forward, but then she sort of wavers, her pale hands twisting before her elaborate bodice. It's the only sign of unease he's seen in her so far. "I would have done the same for Cailan. Had I known. My father... sometimes, when you are too close to somebody, you never expect such a betrayal from them. It is impossible to see it coming."

He doesn't quite understand why she's telling *him* what she would have done for Cailan, but he lets it rest. It's probably more to reassure her than for his benefit. "I would have, too," he said. "So would Duncan. We never would have let him go into that battle if we knew what Loghain was planning."

"You're a good man, Alistair," Anora says. "Many in your position would have been just as liable to fall to treachery."

"Yes, but they most certainly wouldn't say that to the future queen's face," Alistair says. "Er. That was a joke. I didn't ever want the throne. Too much chair for me, honestly. I'm a floor person."

She gives him a curious look, shakes her head, and continues past him.

He scrambles back into George's room to hide.

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They do sleep. It's all they really can do, both of them well and truly exhausted by the day's proceedings. The next day, Alistair wakes to watery morning light, the sound of a drizzle outside, and George in his arms instead of the other way 'round. He thinks he might just be feeling a little extra protective of her after all that's gone on.

When she wakes, he's reading beside her, and she looks a bit puzzled by the book. "What're you reading? 'S big."

"It's a treatise on Ferelden Landsmeets," he explains. "I've been trying to read up—it seems some of them are relatively civil and quite dry to get through, and honestly, it doesn't seem like that's what we're up against. The more... confrontational ones tend to lead to a duel."

She sits up and leans back against the pillows beside him. "You think Loghain's going to try to duel me?"

"I think that if today's investigation into the alienage doesn't go well, and if we don't play our cards right, he'll outright *attack* you. A duel is the better

outcome." He shuts the book, putting a scrap of paper between the pages to bookmark it. "If it does come down to that, you'll be able to choose a champion to fight in your stead."

"Loghain certainly won't," George says.

"He won't," Alistair agrees. "But George... I want you to. I want you to choose me."

The look in her eyes is hard, stony. "Because you want revenge for Duncan? Or because you want to protect me?"

He gives her a helpless shrug. "Can't it be both?" He sets the book aside. "Listen, love, it's not just... Loghain is a decorated veteran with years of field experience. You're a talented fighter in your own right, but you're also used to being able to lob fireballs at people before you hit them with a sword."

"I'd have to fight him without magic."

"I worry people would claim it's unfair if you didn't," Alistair says. "And I can't imagine... telling you to fight without magic would be like telling me to fight with a hand tied behind my back."

"It would," she says. "But I can do it. Loghain is a general, used to commanding troops from afar. I've no doubt he's strong in his own right, and it'll be close, but he's not the one who's been gutting darkspawn in the field for months."

It feels like overconfident bluster, meant to sway him into letting her do something incredibly dangerous. "Please call on me if you need to," he says. "You know my sword is yours."

"Well, I'll need your sword when we go to the alienage," George tells him, pushing up and out of bed without room for further argument.

She's not going to let him fight the duel.

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The morning of the Landsmeet is sunny and pleasant, which feels like it ought to be a good sign, but Alistair's got no use for pleasant goodmornings. His heart is pounding so hard, the only thing in his ears is his own pulse. Cauthrien tries to stop them at the door, and it's a testament to George's cunning that she can convince a woman who arrested them a day or so ago to stand down with a few well-placed questions of Loghain's capability.

Their evidence is strong. Anora's case for the throne is strong. *George* is strong, walking straight-backed into the throne room, armed and armored, with her hair pulled back into a severe twist of braids that wraps around her scalp, thanks to Leliana's careful hands. She's Ferelden as could be, with her mabari at her side, and despite all she's been through, she's still got that earnest, wide-eyed face, and she looks so *young* compared to Loghain.

She is everything Loghain is not.

Things come down to a duel, as predicted.

George doesn't call on a champion to fight in her stead, as predicted.

Alistair is hiding a little bit. Cowering behind Leliana feels stupid, because she's half his size, but Leliana's facing resolutely forward, her eyes on George and Loghain as the ring of blade against armor echoes through the chamber. Alistair thought about giving George his shield, but he knew she wouldn't take it. She fights better with both hands free; it's a bad idea to encumber her with something she's unused to even if that free hand isn't used for spellwork.

"Look," Leliana tells him, smacking his hand. "You're missing your lady winning her fight."

Only then does he focus on the battlefield, his heart in his throat.

Leliana's right. Loghain is faltering, his heavy swings missing her at every turn, the swift, narrow lash of Spellweaver's enchanted blade flicking to catch any openings. There's a trail of blood on the floor and it's his, from a

strike on his calf and another on his arm. There's a dent in George's pauldron but she's otherwise unharmed.

Now, Alistair is straining to see over the crowd in front of him. She's winning. She's going to mete out vengeance on both their parts before his eyes, and he knows what all of Ferelden is seeing.

They're watching a warrior fighting hard against someone older and more skilled than she, and winning because she's unpredictable. They're watching a Warden, with all the strength that entails, a person who is used to fighting enemies several times her size, and who knows how to use her opponent's force against them.

They're watching the woman who's going to end the Blight.

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Alistair keeps blinking like he's waking from a dream.

He doesn't know how it's possible they've exited the Landsmeet in one piece, with Loghain's head firmly off his shoulders and Anora's queendom cemented. George's minor injuries from the fight have been healed up, and everywhere they go, now, people are looking at her like she's already saved them.

But there's still a Blight to handle.

"We'll head to Soldier's Peak to meet up with the rest of our troops and travel to Redcliffe," George explains to Riordan, who, despite being the most senior Warden in Ferelden at the moment, is deferring to her. "You'll join us before we set out?"

"I should be no more than two days behind you," Riordan says. "I'll bring the recruits I have from Denerim. Their Joining can take place at the keep, and we can discuss what it will take to defeat an archdemon." About a dozen young men and women have come to them to join the Wardens after hearing about George's triumph at the Landsmeet. They have to turn down any who are already pledged to the Queen's army, or even the *templars*,

because there's a few of those who beg them to join, but they've got a good group. Many of them are elves, pledging their devotion to the woman who took down the men plaguing the alienage.

"Can we do it?" George asks. "Given our current resources."

"It's going to be the most difficult thing any of us have done in our lifetimes, and there is no way we will all make it through." Riordan has never been one to mince words. "But we can."

Alistair looks at George, but he doesn't need to say anything. Her face is enough to let him know that she doesn't like the idea that one of them might not make it out alive any more than he does.

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They don't realize how founded that worry is until Riordan reaches them at Soldier's Peak and explains the true danger behind slaying an archdemon. This follows the revelation that the archdemon and his army are headed for Denerim, not Redcliffe, and that they're arriving *now*, pouring out of a Deep Roads entrance nobody had mapped and attacking the city like ants from a hill.

They need to gather the army come dawn, turn around, and march back. If they make good time, the city will already be under siege. The *Queen* is still there. Alistair has no doubt protecting Anora is top priority for everybody in Denerim at present, but he'd rather have a darkspawn army marching *anywhere else*.

It'll take two days to get there from Soldier's Peak, and then, if they're lucky, Riordan will be the one to sacrifice himself and slay the archdemon.

But when has Alistair ever been lucky?

Alistair is moping in their room when George shows, looking just as grim as he's feeling.

This woman who, as long as Alistair has known her, has never been at a loss for words, opens her mouth, then closes it, pressing her lips together. When she does speak, it's stilted, as if she's been rehearsing it in her head on the way over. "I... have something for you."

He looks at her hands, and she shows him they're empty and shakes her head.

"Not like that—I have information for you."

She sits on the bed, and he goes and rests beside her, leaning in to try to get a look at her face. She's chewing on her lower lip.

"Morrigan—" her voice catches, almost breaking. "Morrigan might have a way to keep us both alive, regardless of whether we slay the archdemon."

This should be wonderful news. "That's... good, right?" he asks.

She shakes her head. "You're not going to like what we have to do to make that happen."

Of course it comes at a terrible price. It always comes at a terrible price. He says, "tell me."

Her explanation starts off bad and gets worse. At first, it's so ludicrous he'd think it's a joke if not for the somber look on her face. Then, it becomes all too real, and it's twisted and awful and everything he'd fear from something Morrigan would call a Dark Ritual.

She leaves nothing out, although he almost wishes she would have.

"That's... a lot," he says, not bothering to hide his grimace.

"I thought about neglecting to tell you the bit about the. You know. Child." She sighs, flopping back onto the bed. "But I can't let you do this without knowing everything there is."

"If I were still in the running for the crown, I might think Morrigan was trying to take over Ferelden," Alistair says. It has the shape of a joke but it

lands hollow and shatters between them. "Ahem. But I don't know what she'd do with a country."

"Hopefully she knows what to do with an infant that has the soul of an archdemon."

Alistair actually laughs at that. Then George laughs, too. He collapses beside her, turning to look at her face. Everything is ridiculous about this. Everything. "Georgie, why can't she just, you know, do something with my... stuff."

"I think the sex is part of the ritual," George says. Her nose wrinkles.

"Gross."

"I know. I'm sorry. Had I the appropriate bits, I'd just do it myself." She touches his chin. "You don't have to. I can't... I absolutely cannot *ask* you to do this."

"Are you kidding? If the alternative is a sixty-six percent chance that you or I will die, I *have* to," Alistair says. "At least we know there's no way Morrigan is lying. She'd never do this willingly."

"Oh, she'd definitely pick Riordan if she could," George says. "I asked her."

"Yeah, but she wouldn't be able to tell him about the archdemon child. Can't picture him being alright with *that*. Can you imagine? '*Oh, Ser Riordan, I want to have sex with you for no particular reason, please do not mind the runes or spells or whatever else I am doing.*' He'd never believe her. Nobody's that weird in bed."

She laughs again, and it's sort of like a snort. "I'm sorry."

"I *knew* Flemeth only rescued me for my body." It's the last joke before his mood turns somber again. "I'm just afraid... I mean, given the set-up Morrigan has laid currently, it's going to be like... I know what it's like growing up without a father. And I can't *exactly* see Morrigan making a

good mother, either. I feel like I'm saving my life by potentially cursing somebody else with the exact problems I grew up with."

"I think Morrigan would be a better parent than we give her credit for," George says. "Or perhaps I'm just telling you that so I don't feel similarly bad for them. At least, it's not a last-minute decision for her, if she's known all along."

"No wonder she didn't like me," Alistair sighs. "It's a selfish way to break this curse. On all our parts. But I'd take just about any avenue to keep you safe—and I know you'd do the same for me. I don't want either of us to have to live without each other."

"So it's settled."

"Urgh. Yes. Everything's settled but my stomach," he groans, sitting up and rubbing his face.

She grabs his arm before he can leave to talk to Morrigan. There's going to have to be a very frank discussion prior to this... engagement. "Alistair. Come here, after, please. I want to take care of you after that."

"I am taking a bath first thing," he says. "But then... I suppose, yes."

"Good."

"You're really not going to be... I mean, I'm about to have sex with another woman."

She shakes her head. "You say that like you're telling me you're about to cut off your own arm. It doesn't inspire jealousy. I'll wait for you. Whatever you need."

He embraces her, kisses her on the head. "I don't deserve you."

"Funny," she says, "I was thinking the same thing."

— — —

He makes Morrigan explain the ritual to him piece by piece. She does so clinically and with obvious disgust.

"This is going to be just as unpleasant as you think it will," Morrigan says, which is sort of a relief.

He sets up his own parameters. "Don't touch me more than you have you, for the, you know, and just. Face away from me?"

"Naturally. Do you really think I wanted to look into your eyes and be reminded of how upset I am making you all the while?"

"You do delight in my suffering."

"Only when it's funny." She sighs. "I wish it did not have to be you. I was hoping we would have time—if we were going all the way to Redcliffe, I could get one of Riordan's recruits to do it. He has a few who are not terrible to look at."

"And I *am* terrible to look at?"

"Yes. As I have said." Her hands twist in her lap. "Alistair, I do not hate you completely. You went with Georgie to defeat my mother in battle because I asked for my own freedom. You are not the worst."

He does not tell her that they absolutely did not defeat her mother in battle. "So you only mostly hate me."

"Indeed."

"Wonderful way to start a romantic evening."

She frowns at him, her narrow eyebrows pointed angrily down. "This will not be romantic, and it will go better without your constant joking. I would like you not to speak for the rest of the night."

"I can do that," he says, glad he's not going to have to say anything to her at all.

— — —

It's weird. Naturally. It's weird and terrible and takes a very long time because it's... difficult. He doesn't want to think of the details.

"It's not like I could picture *you*," he says to George afterwards. She's got him wrapped up in a blanket, and he has his head on her lap, her fingers stroking through his wet hair. He washed very thoroughly, even though Morrigan really didn't touch him more than she needed to. "So it took me forever to. Finish."

"I'd have pictured you," George says. "Just to get it over with faster."

"Nope. Couldn't bring myself to." He presses his cheek against her thigh. It's the feel of her that's helping him come back to himself, but it's also her smell, so unlike Morrigan and all of... *that*. "I asked her if she had a spell to erase my memory, and she said she'd gladly do it, but it could also give me permanent amnesia, so I'd rather not."

"I'd just make you fall in love with me again," George says.

"Oh, I don't doubt it. It'd just be bad to forget I'm a Warden right before a major battle. And what if, say, I forgot how to hold a sword at all? Or how to walk? Or how to speak? Too risky."

"You're right."

He leans into her touch, letting it soothe away the lingering crawling feeling he's got. "Let's just hope the next few days of battle for our lives can erase this night in my memory."

He asks her to hug him as tight as she can that night, so that all he can feel is her.

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The battle for Denerim is chaotic, dangerous, the hardest he's ever fought in his life, and he wouldn't be anywhere but at George's side.

They find Riordan's body broken in the streets, and Alistair is sad to lose him and a little wretchedly relieved that they did that bloody ritual for a *reason*, now.

They stand on the steps to Fort Drakon, atop which is, apropos of the name, a dragon, a ring of Circle mages around them waiting for George's orders. She turns to face them, looking ever more like a commander.

"Wait here while we clear the tower. Sound the horns and gather everybody who's still alive to follow us in for a final push. We'll send up a beacon when we're ready—is everyone clear?"

A general call of assent follows her words.

She turns on her heel, and Alistair expects her to head into the fort, with that same blistering look of determination on her face. She's so covered in darkspawn blood and soldiers' both, it's impossible to tell her armor is bright ironbark beneath the grime. There's a cut on her chin that's been bleeding for some time, and her nose has been broken and fixed once already by Wynne, so she's got blood smeared down from her nostrils to her lips, too.

She goes straight to him, instead, hooking one hand around the back of his neck. "Stay alive," she says.

"Only if you promise me the same."

She kisses him, deeply, furiously, and he tastes blood in it, and passion, and everything he's fighting for.

Then they go to kill an archdemon.

— — —

The fight is pandaemonium, and which of them will take the last strike is anybody's guess.

But it's George. It's always been her. He knows, when he sees her taking a running leap at a dragon, sword in hand, that she's always been the hero.

There's a magnificent burst of light and a concussive force that blows him backward where he stands, and for a second he's breathlessly terrified that the ritual was for nothing, that she's not going to make it, because how could *anyone* be at the epicenter of that and win. He can't even look for several moments, and when he does, his eyesight is blurry with afterimages of the column of white light which must have been visible from Nevarra.

The archdemon is on the ground, the sickly red light of the blight through its body fading. George leaps off its head, wincing as she falls and going to a knee. That's all he needs to get up and run for her, helping her back to her feet.

"I'm fine, I'm fine," she's saying, but even still, he's calling Wynne over.

The last of the darkspawn in Denerim fall without much effort, and Alistair and the person he loves most in this blighted world stand atop a tower and in the shadow a dragon's corpse, and watch dawn arrive.

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"What the *fuck*," George shouts, looking in the mirror after it's all said and done, "has happened to my *hair*!?"

"Nothing much?" Alistair says. They're in the palace in Denerim, or rather, what's left of it, having spent the full day working on chasing down and killing off the last darkspawn, and then rounding up everyone who's still alive. Only by moonlight did the Hero of Ferelden (that's what they're calling Georgie, now) and her team finally find someplace to rest, and they passed out until midday.

"Nothing much!?! I look like I've aged thirty years!"

It's white—rather, it's streaked with white, two rather obvious sections coming from her temples. "I think it looks dashing," he says. "I'm assuming it had something to do with an archdemon exploding in your face. But nobody would know, seeing as you're the only person who's ever gotten through that alive."

"I can't even hide it." She fusses, making an attempt, and then lets it fall.

"I didn't realize you were so vain about your hair." He can't hide that he's laughing. She's examining it in the mirror from all angles, watching where the silvery-white cuts through the black.

"Of course I am, if I wasn't, I'd've cut it all off by now," she says, shaking her head and then tying her hair back out of her face. "Whatever. If I can't see it, it won't bother me. Let's get moving, I want to do another sweep of the districts and check on the new Wardens. Now that we don't have Riordan to mind them, we'll need to split that between me and you—"

"George." He stops her in her tracks, pressing himself against her back and hugging her. "Can't we just take a moment to revel in the fact that we've both made it out alive? It's pretty impressive, given the circumstances."

"We could," she says, turning in his arms and kissing him. "But if we do that, it'll be hours before I'll allow myself to be pried off you, and there's too much... there's too much."

"I know." He's got a mental list of everything 'too much' running through his head, and he imagines she does, too. "I'm just happy we're both alright."

"Me too." She allows him to kiss her again, to linger over it. Then, she says, "seriously, if we don't stop—"

"I know, I know. Can't blame a man for trying, though."

— — —

'Too much' lasts for two weeks, and the mounting list of things to handle only seems to increase in pressure the longer it lasts. They want to make George Warden-Commander. They want to send the new Warden recruits with groups of Orlesians out to the countryside to clear out the remainders of the Blight. Anora holds a celebration that's sort of a coronation, except she's already Queen, and George is recognized formally as the Hero of Ferelden and Commander of the Grey, and the Wardens are given a keep to

rule over and the city attached to govern. Honestly, that just feels like more work, at this point.

Alistair finally manages to snag her while they're working with the Circle mages to help out with a clinic that's been set up for those injured in the battle, and to perform examinations to check for the taint in anybody who'd been in contact with darkspawn. He has to literally snag her, grabbing her elbow to stop her in the middle of her task.

"What's wrong?" she asks, drawing the back of her hand across her forehead. It's nowhere near the height of summer but she's been working hard enough to sweat, helping with cases that require moving patients, because most mages are built slighter than Georgie, who's powerful for a warrior, let alone a mage. They tend to get her to do the heavy lifting.

"Nothing," he says. "Well, actually, Irving seems to bloody *hate* me, so that's a bit annoying. I just wanted to say: tonight. You, me, dinner, our room, a bottle of wine, and nobody interrupting."

"Oh, *good*," she sighs. "I've got plans for you. And it's been... Maker's breath, since before the Landsmeet? Tragic. Anyhow, Irving doesn't dislike you, as a person, he dislikes what you are to me."

"What?" He's busy calculating whether her timeline is correct (it is) and misses what she says about Irving.

"That you're my partner. He's pissed off because I kissed you in front of a whole bunch of his mages, and I make no effort to hide it otherwise."

"*Oh*, is that a bad thing? Ought you get better at hiding it?"

She kisses him as if to tell him, no, she ought *not* to. "No. I'd rather piss him off more. If he's going to do something with the measure of indepenence Anora can grant the Circles, at least they can stop with the ridiculous moratorium on mages having families."

"So, I should kiss you whenever he's around. Hold your hand and trail after you like a lovesick puppy, yes?"

She cocks her head to the side, putting on mock confusion. "Do you not already do that?"

"Ah, I do. Perfect, I'm great at my job."

"What job is that, exactly?" she asks, lifting up an entire crate of poultices and passing them off to Wynne's apprentice, who breezes through with no attention for George and Alistair's conversation.

"Warden trophy husband," Alistair says.

"Not yet."

"Mm?"

"Unless I've missed something, you're not my husband *yet*."

He laughs, shaking his head. "Well, no, I mean—it's kind of an expression, more like—"

"I know," George says. "I'll see you tonight. I found you a gift."

"I look forward to it, then. You're the *best* at presents," Alistair tells her, and gives her another kiss before he leaves.

The only thing running through his mind are the words, '*not yet, not yet, not yet.*'

— — —

Her gift is a bird.

It's a little odd, but she explains it to him in the rookery, which belongs, apparently, to a noble Leliana has connections to. It's a raven, and it's specially trained as a courier.

"They want you on the thaw hunts, for sure," George says. "There's no getting around it—and they won't let me go."

The building smells like feathers and the bird is giving Alistair some sort of eyeball. Alistair doesn't like what George is saying.

"They want you in Amaranthine," Alistair concludes.

"Yes." George meets eyes with the raven, not with him. "She's trained to fly back and forth between Amaranthine, and wherever you find yourself. You'll have to work with her for a while to get her used to you, but that's why I wanted to give her to you now."

"How soon?"

"Two weeks' time 'til the outset of the thaw hunts," George says. "And they want me in Amaranthine by month's end."

He pinches the bridge of his nose, blowing out a sigh. "It's too soon."

"Don't I know it." She folds her arms, knocking her hip against his. "I think we might've become a little codependent over the past year together, Alistair."

"What, us? Never." He presses his nose against her hair right where it's gone silver. "Now c'mon, love. Take me to bed, will you?"

— — —

When he'd planned this through in his mind, he hadn't pictured jumping straight to sex, but he can't stop wanting her so desperately and he can't stop thinking about how the last person he'd been with was Morrigan and *she* won't stop begging for him inside her and he just—

Yeah.

The first round's over like a snap for him. He's pretty sure he barely lasts a minute. George never minds that, though, especially not when he winds one strong arm around her thigh and pulls her legs open to get his mouth on her.

He pushes two fingers deep, curls them, sucks on her clit until she's coming as hard as he did, and then she yanks him up and kisses him and *Maker* they are a *mess*.

The second round starts slower, softer. He lays on top of her and lets his full weight press her into the mattress and she holds onto him, her fingers running through his hair, her skin sort of sticking to his, but in a way that's comfortable.

He knows she's up to something when one of her knees draws up. She's getting herself leverage, and then she's moving against him, a slow grind, more of a stretch, that lets him feel every inch of her muscle pull against him. And he knows *she* can feel he's hard again.

"You gonna fuck me again tonight, Alistair?"

"D'you want me to?" His face is still buried in her neck but he's pretty sure she hears him.

"Of course."

"Just like this, then? I'm— *ah*— feeling sort of lazy, tonight." It's *far* too easy just to get back inside her like this. "Well, that's not exactly the right way to put it. I just want to be close to you."

"Can't really get closer than this," she teases him.

"I *know*," he sighs, pleasure evident in his voice. "Isn't it great?"

She throws her head back and laughs. "Maker, you're so cute."

"I'm not kidding." He slows down, brushes a curl of sweat-damp hair off her forehead. "I just... I really love you."

She swallows, and then there's this look in her eye, an unexpected severity to her. It's how she looks about to face down something big. Determined. "Alistair." Her eyes leave his for a moment and then catch his again—warm brown has never looked so steely. "I want this—you—forever."

He's thought as much since the first, but he gets that it's bigger for her. She's had people who weren't forever before. "Me too, love," he says. "You know you're... everything. All of it."

He doesn't know what he expects to hear, but it isn't, "will you marry me?" because up 'til now he's been pretty sure he isn't dreaming.

"What?"

"Is that a good '*what*' or a bad '*what*'?"

"Good, I mean, I was just surprised." He rolls to lay beside her and draws her into his arms again. He pulls out first, because they've moved from sex into something else, and he'll be too stupid to talk if he can still feel her around him. "Yes, love. Of course—that'd make me happier than anything."

"I think..." she pauses, then laughs. "I think perhaps my timing could have been better."

She leans into him, tracing her fingertips up and down his side. It's a little ticklish, but he's still aroused enough that his mind blocks that bit of the sensation in lieu of how *good* it always feels to have her hands on him.

"I want to marry you," she says, firm not in a way that means she's restating her own convictions, but in a simplistic truth. "Because I love you, and because I want to be with you forever—but also because... I want an outward sign of how much we mean to one another. I want the Wardens to know there is someone that I place above the Order, and I want the Circle to see a mage bound to a lover in a commitment they can't break." Her voice starts to waver a little, and her hand drops against his side.

"You say that like it's a bad thing."

"Shouldn't I only want it because I love you?"

He shrugs. "If that were the case, there would be no point to marriage, right? You'd just love who you love and live your life with them. And maybe that's fine, but at one point someday went, 'hey, I want all of society

to recognize that this person and I are committed to one another,' and that's marriage. 'S not even always about love, right?" He tacks on a quick addition. "It is for you and me, of course."

She looks at him like this sometimes, like he's said something profound, like he's a miracle. He doesn't know what to do with it.

"I want to marry you, too, George Amell. And I want everybody in the world to know me for one thing: being the Hero of Ferelden's husband." (Anora coined that little moniker for George. It's hard to tell if she delights in it or if she hates it.)

She grins, wide enough to show her dimples and her missing tooth. "Careful, Alistair. Those are fighting words."

He knows how much she dislikes it when he refuses to acknowledge his own merit, but this isn't that, exactly. "Then fight me. I'll yell it to all of Denerim, don't think I won't."

"I think the world should know you because you're smart, brave, heroic, and you've a particularly good mind for history," she says.

"I'm going to change my name to Mr. Alistair Amell."

George laughs, loud, and grabs him by the shoulders, pinning him flat onto the bed. "That's not how it *works*, love."

"Seems right. Seems like that should be. You proposed, so I get your last name."

She's slung her leg over his hips and it seems like their evening activities are going to pick up where they left off, and then she says, "I really did propose, didn't I?"

"Yeah." He knows he's smiling like a besotted idiot. But he's *her* besotted idiot. Forevermore. "You did."

She kisses him, swift and a little ferocious. "And you said yes."

“I did.” He groans, as she rocks back, and he can feel the warmth of her against his cock again.

“It’s settled then, yes?”

“Yes. We’re gonna get married.” He can’t help laughing, he can’t help crying just a little bit. It’s pure joy coursing through him, though it’s spiked with lust. When they tell the story of their engagement to all their friends, later, he thinks he’s gonna leave out the absolutely wicked twist of her hips as she slides back down onto his cock, taking him just like their first time, in a perfect sort of symmetry.

He’ll leave out the way he sobs when he comes, too, and the way her hair falls down around his face like a curtain as her forehead presses to his and he feels so *safe* and happy right there. He’ll tell them he cried, yes, but not that he said, ‘*yes, it’s alright, keep going,*’ and held onto her while she rearranged herself to rub off against his thigh, wet heat and breathless gasps, telling him she’s gonna make him hers *forever*.

That part will be just for them.

He’ll tell everybody else that after it’s all said and done, he says, “oh! We didn’t even have the *wine*,” and then they’ll realize he forgot to bring it to the room at all in the first place.

— — —

Planning a wedding while you're in the middle of a major reconstruction after finishing a war wrought by a deadly and destructive mass of blighted creatures isn't exactly an easy task, but neither was stopping the Blight in the first place.

It gets easier when they decide to just *do* it, going just outside the city to some clearing in a little wooded area, with all their friends around and nobody else.

Leliana knows enough to say the official words, but the part that’ll stick with Alistair later is the promises they made quietly to one another,

whispered so none of the others could hear.

"Even when we have to be apart, I will never truly leave you, not until the Void takes me," she says.

"I will always be a home for you to come back to," he says.

When she pulls him in and kisses him, there's a lot of cheering, and a wolf-whistle he thinks comes from Oghren. It's a perfect moment, until they realized all the shouting was enough to draw the attention of some nearby darkspawn, and then Alistair's glad that he and George both thought their new Official Warden Armor made the best possible wedding attire, and they both had swords at their belts.

Alistair thinks most people probably would want anything *but* being attacked by darkspawn on their wedding day, but for him and George, fighting side by side the day before he leaves, one last battle together, it couldn't be anything but perfect.

Author's Note:

Incredible thanks to anyone who'd read all the way through this. I really had so much fun with George and writing this made playing the game an even better experience.